633 such modern problems as : increase in the number of hours of daily electricity; extension of city boundaries to include many scattered hamlets (e.g. of ethnic artisans) so as to be given to the rural "näch lebash" (thiefcatchers in white) with regard to the latest reawakening of an old family feud (däm mällässä) that threatens bloodshed; to increase municipal tax revenues; what to do about accompanying official visitors, nosy foreigners, visiting dignitaries, etc.; whether to abandon the insect-infested olf prison or try to rebuild it; etc.

[643] Once or twice a year the emperor himself can be expected, with his retinue, requiring careful preparations and bringing much tension in advance to the urban officials. Sometimes he may address the people at large on the old "yähezb addäbabay", which must be marked out and cleared. If the town is also the provincial capital, the emperor can be expected to examine not only that office, but the heads of the sub-provinces, judges, elemantary school, the provincial hospital; etc.

633 Religious tolerance, decreed by the emperor, now
● 798 permits such ethnoreligious minorities as the Muslims to reside wherever they please. In the past they were restricted to a section of the town, usually the part between the floodplain and the big market. For example, in the old city of Gondar, this section, locally called
633 "Addis Äläm" (lit. New world) was assigned them. Despite its name, this is the oldest section, and was probably named so over a century ago because it was newer than

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

X 794 563 593 E489

Some women, particularly those possessed by the female zar Shanqit, learn to solicit money from strangers (as described during the convention). Some women thus gradually enter the path to prostitution, while others become independent businesswomen.

The attitude of husbands of zar-possessed wives varies and often is ambivalent. A rustic balagär often fears that if he refuses the time and money and sacrifices demanded by his wife for her zar, the neglected zar will take worse revenge (e.g. on his cattle) or will send locusts to eat his grain, or so distract his wife that she will set fire to the hut. He knows also that if he divorces her, half his cattle and other movable property will be taken by the wife. Thus it is cheaper to let her take an occasional chicken or, more rarely, a young goat to the zar. Some men, especially in town, are ashamed to admit that their wives frequent the house of the zar. Semi-educated men, who might themselves consult the zar doctor on some matter of business, forbid their wives to go there. This is more to protest a blow to their prestige than out of modernism, but they will divorce her if she persists.

X 794 586 798

A chronically unhappy marriage not infrequently ends in divorce by way of the zar cult. The "mänfäs gubaë" is placed in an awkward position when the husband or the wife sue for divorce from their "semanya" marriage on the grounds of zar possession. For while as priest of the Coptic church he cannot admit the reality of the zar world, there is sufficient overlap between that and the world of evil spirits in which the priest does (unofficially) believe and against which he may himself, as däbtära, have written amulets. This explains at least in part why the Coptic church ignores the zar cult, and thus

X 794 798

X 794 [798] tolerates it, as long as the residential location of the zar house is sufficiently beyond hearing distance of the church.

[562] Men are often ashamed to admit that they themselves are zar-possessed devotees. If possessed by a feminine zar, considered more stupid and ignorant than a male zar, in most cases, it is considered [782] possible to "outwit" her. A clever zar doctor may negotiate with a female zar to accept a consecrated hen, never to be slaughtered for her, merely to be looked at. The owner of the hen can then sell the eggs, and has a (totemically?) protected hen!

[787] More often, men consult zar doctors on business - though by stealth. In the town of Gondar, e.g., a man wishing to find a job for his nephew might present the problem to Lady Salamtew, who would listen quietly, accept his "frankincense money", and tell him to return on a certain day for her advice.

X 794 782 443 The economic significance of the zar cult varies, but can be considerable especially in the provincial towns. Most zar spirits, especially the powerful and clever ones, like "generosity" in sacrifices, are pleased by voluptuousness, insist on healthy animals for sacrifice, neat gifts and attire of their "horses" (a woman who is a clotheshorse would certainly be regarded as possessed), incense that has been imported from Yemen, aromatic herbs, imported perfumes, European utensils and alcoholic beverages (distilled arrak). Retail traders know this and encourage women to buy "nice things for the zar". It is well known that many women are "struck" by the spirit for the first time just after having visited ("window shopped" in the modern equivalent) a big market. No wonder zar doctors are popular with the Muslim Ethiopian retail traders, who not infrequently let them take some fancied item without payment, as a sort of silent commission!

Yet despite this hierarchy of spirits, in the static construct of the zar cosmology, the factor of syncretism dominates the dynamic functions. As a result, a Coptic woman possessed by a Muslim zar may wear the colorful print head shawl of the Muslim woman; and even a Falasha woman, living in a semi-isolated Falasha hamlet, may suddenly refuse to shave her head (which is required of wives by Falasha religious law) and will braid it in the fashion of a Coptic Amhara woman without serious ostracism by her kinfolk which would be her punishment otherwise. At the wadaja ceremony, like the one at the convention, Coptic women and doctors chant hymns modelled after Muslim worship, refer to the zar as "prophet", and use Arabic loanwords, to flatter and cajole a Christian zar !

Finally, religious syncretism in the zar cult is often intertwined with Christian cosmology and hagiology. Thus, Zar Sayd-Qadr, of Muslim origin, has become synonymous with Jesus Christ; The legendary Amhara Christian saint Gäbrä Mänfäs Qeddus is believed to have been an ally and advisor of the powerful Zar Säyfu Čhängär. The archangels Mikaël and Gabriël, who are given feasts on taskar memorials for Coptic Christian departed souls, are regarded in the zar cult as "commander of the right house" and "commander of the left house" of zars (patterned on the human, tradional Abyssinian army). The Christian zar Abba Yosef if believed to join other Copts in bathing in the river to celebrate Ṭemqät (Epiphany). Christian zar spirits remain dormant during the lenten season.

In view of this, it is perhaps not too surprising that the Coptic Church of Abyssinia remains passive, in effect tolerant by default, toward the zar cult and its social institution.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

Coptic community. The present Emperor himself visited Jerusalem recently.

Possibly owing to ignorance and lack of education, the Church does not make any missionary efforts of its own amongst its subject races of Moslems and pagans, and up to recent years it did not tolerate, or at all events welcome, such efforts on the part of others. This is perhaps hardly surprising, for much of the missionary enterprise known to the Abyssinians had mingled politics with religious efforts, and had interfered in matters which had better have been left alone.

The Jesuits were expelled in 1633, and some who would not go were killed. The Protestant missionaries were expelled in 1838. Theodore can hardly have been said to have welcomed missionaries, though so far from expelling them he chained them up and would not let them go. King John expelled them again in 1886, and Menelik barely tolerated them, although a French mission has been established continuously in Tigré for a good many years.

But quite recently more missionaries have been allowed to start operations, especially in the Galla districts, and the Americans are particularly to the fore in this work in Addis Ababa and elsewhere. In addition, there is a French mission at Harrar and a convent at Addis Ababa, mainly educational and non-proselytizing, and a Swedish mission at the latter town of a similar character.

So far I do not think there is much trace of success by any of these institutions, but on the other hand there is evidence to shew (and my impressions are confirmed by American, Swedish, and French writers) that Islam, as in other parts of Africa, is making progress among

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sponsored the translation of works from Arabic. Among these were *Laws of the Kings*, a collection of civil and canon laws which became the official basis for judication, and a penitential manual, *Spiritual Medicine*, the last major production in Ge'ez literature.

Yohānnes also continued Fāsil's work of "purifying" the church. He decreed that descendants of the Portuguese must leave Ethiopia unless they joined the Orthodox Church and that Muslims must reside apart, either in their own villages or in ghettos. Ordained as a priest before becoming emperor, Yohānnes followed keenly the theological disputes of his day. Toward the end of his reign he convoked a synod in Gondar to discuss the nature of the Holy Spirit in Christ, the chief theological question in Ethiopian history.

Iyāsu I, like many of Ethiopia's rulers, appears to have been moved by deep religious feeling. Describing Iyāsu's religiosity, one of the priests of Gondar wrote an eulogy a few years after his death:

> The king used to stand at the window of his palace . . . and listen from his tower on high to the singing of the priests and learned men, to their gentle hymns which moistened the bones by their exceeding tenderness. When their offerings pleased him greatly he was pierced with affection for them and drawn by the harmony of their heavenly peace. For this reason . . . he would prepare for them dinners filled with delights, and bid them eat with him in his royal chambers, ornamented all about with the beauty of pure gold and wrought silver. He would take off his gold necklace and present it to them. He adorned them with garments of purple and of staffs interwoven with gold from the treasury of his kingdom. . . . None of the kings before him had done such as he, and none of the clergy of yore had been treated as were his priests and learned men. After the dinners, the king and his priests together sang hymns of joy and jubilation all night long in the palace—in their time of pleasure, in the sweetness of divine ministry.*

Iyāsu the Great did much to establish Gondar as the most important center of religious culture in Ethiopia. To this end he brought outstanding priests and learned men from all over the country to his capital. From Gojjam, for example, he brought the great master of religious verse, Kiflē Yohānnes, whose lines are remembered even today. The number of teachers in Gondar in his time exceeded five hundred; there were one hundred and fifty at his church Dabra Berhān Selassie alone.* It was under Iyāsu I that the classic subject matter of the higher religious studies in Abyssinia—*sämā* ("religious

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* Dabra Berhān Selassie, one of the two churches built by Iyāsu I, is the only one of the original churches of Gondar which survived later conflagrations of the city. The original paintings which covered its walls have been preserved, as well as the remarkable ceiling from which rows of wide-eyed angels look down from between wooden beams. The church provides separate places for nobility and commoners, and a balcony for the emperor.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

#175 643 633 517 chant"), *qenē*, and *tergum* ("interpretation")—is said to have received its definitive organization.

Dāwit III appears to have had a pronounced interest in Amharic folk song, for the more perfect enjoyment of which he built a special hall in the imperial compound. Because of this he has been called "Dāwit the Singer"—no term of praise in a land where minstrelsy is looked down on and where serious deportment is expected of royalty. Actually, this epithet, with its connotation of "playboy," was not deserved. Dāwit was a religious man, and in his brief reign built two churches. Knowledgeable Gondarēs today insist that, at first, even the priests were happy to join him in the amusement hall to listen to the one-stringed fiddles and the witty songs. Only after Dāwit's partiality to the [498] Unctionist doctrine (that the humanity of Christ was made divine through the unction of the Holy Spirit) led him to persecute the Unionist clergy (who hold that humanity and divinity are blended in the single nature of Christ) did they abuse his music hall and tarnish his name.[7]

[341] Interest in architecture was revived by Bakāffā. He constructed a long U-shaped castle which, together with the new castle of his Empress Mantuāb, completed the major complex of buildings in Gondar. Mantuāb's castle is [532] noted for bas-reliefs of the Ethiopian Cross, while her other castle at nearby Qusquam is decorated with bas-reliefs depicting saints and animals as well.

The tastes of Iyāsu II were especially refined. He cultivated extensive gardens and orchards, an unusual pursuit for an Amhara monarch. He built a large and handsome church. He began to construct a palace, in the lavish [344] decoration of which he took a personal interest. Budge writes of this:

> A number of Christians who had fled from Smyrna took refuge in Gondar, and the king employed them to decorate his palace with filigree work. The upper parts of the walls of the throne room were covered with three rows of Venetian mirrors set in gilded copper frames, and their lower parts . . . with slabs of ivory. The roof was made of painted cane mosaic, the work of the Falasha. . . . Iyāsu II spent his days with the workmen, and himself learned to do some of the work under the direction of the Greek workmen.[8]

#175 633 517 [543] [874] The decline of imperial power at Gondar after Iyāsu II did not produce a slackening of the cultural activities that had been concentrated there. During the reign of Takla Hāymānot II (1769-77), for example, when the actual power at Gondar was in the hands of a lord from Tigre, seven more churches were built. One of these, Ba'ātā Māryām, eventually became one of the most famous schools for the teaching of *aquāqūām* ("religious dance"), and in its heyday boasted 276 masters. Another, Abi Egzi, became noted for instruction in *tergum*, and is still a leading school for such studies.

[538] The composition of verse, in forms which had become canonized during the early Gondar period, continued to flourish. As political turmoil often

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

referents are relative: a man living at 7,500 feet may be considered *qolaññā* by one living at 10,000 and *dəgaññā* by one living at 6,000 feet.

The broadest membership circle that the Amhara peasant normally thinks in terms of is that of the ethnic group consisting of all Amhara.[10] The ethnic self-conception of the Amhara is one which stresses certain physical and cultural characteristics, thanks to which he regards himself as superior to all non-Abyssinian groups in Ethiopia as well as to all non-Ethiopian nationals. With regard to race, the Amhara consider themselves distinctly more handsome than both the white man and the Negro man, to both of whom they apply derisive epithets. Their cultural identity is defined chiefly with respect to religion and language.

To all Amhara except a small minority who are Muslim, the name of their ethnic group is synonymous with "Christian." The term signifies Ethiopian Orthodox Christian; for the Amhara peasant, "Catholic" and "Protestant" are equivalent to "Muslim" and "pagan" as terms designating so many kinds of heathens. And being an Ethiopian Christian is to the Amhara a mark of superiority in at least two respects: it means belonging to a chosen people, heirs to the Jews and sole bearers of authentic Christianity; and it means being an adept in praying and fasting, which to the Amhara are peculiarly Abyssinian arts. This orientation has motivated a certain amount of exclusionism vis-à-vis non-Christian Ethiopians. The latter are disdained because they are not Christian, while at the same time the particularistic cast of Abyssinian Christianity has made the Amhara somewhat reluctant to proselytize and admit non-Abyssinians to the fold. A similar exclusiveness colors the Amhara's sentiments about his language. Knowledge of Amharic is considered another index of superiority, and the Amhara look down on Ethiopians who do not speak Amharic or who speak it with an accent.

The Amhara claim superiority over other Ethiopian peoples in connection with certain other aspects of culture besides religion and language, although most Amhara peasants have very little knowledge about the other ethnic groups in the country.[11] Occupational hunters and pastoral nomads are ridiculed, for example, because of their ignorance of the arts of farming and of eating *Injarā*. Vis-à-vis Europeans, on the other hand, the Amhara's self-image tends to stress qualities of bravery and toughness. Insofar as he has had contact with foreigners, the Amhara has become self-conscious about his rugged way of life—his hot foods, endurance on trips, courage in revenge, and virile longevity—and looks down on the softness of the European.

Being an Amhara is thus belonging to a superior category of human beings. This is not simple ethnocentrism; it reflects rather a basically aristocratic orientation that is repeated within the Amhara fold. It is not only members of other ethnic and religious groups who are considered inferior,